

Spotlight on VET CROATIA

Vocational education
and training systems
in Europe

2023

VET in Croatia

Overall responsibility for vocational education and training (VET) in Croatia lies with the Ministry of Science and Education supported by the Agency for VET and Adult Education (ASOO). The agency is responsible for developing VET curricula, continuous professional development of VET teachers, skills competitions and quality assurance. Stakeholders are involved in curriculum development, sector skills councils and in the VET Council.

Initial VET is publicly financed and free of charge. All VET programmes combine professional and general competences, to varying degrees; all include work-based learning (WBL), with duration and type varying.

VET is provided at upper secondary and postsecondary levels; the entry point is completion of compulsory education at age 14 or 15.

At upper secondary level, 70% of learners participate in initial vocational education and training (IVET). Around two thirds of VET learners are in 4-year school-based programmes, with under one third in 3-year programmes. Only one upper secondary programme lasts 5 years, leading to a general nursing qualification.

The 4-year, mostly school-based VET programmes and dual education programmes lead to qualifications at the Croatian Qualifications Framework (CROQF) level 4.2/ EQF level 4 and allow progression to tertiary education upon completing State *Matura* exams.

3-year VET programmes give access to the labour market and lead to qualifications at the CROQF level 4.1/ EQF level 4; they include school-based programmes, apprenticeships (programmes for crafts, nationally referred to as unified model of education, JMO), and dual education programmes. Within the final exam for completion of the 3-year JMO programme, learners take the apprenticeship exam. Around 13% of all IVET learners are in apprenticeships.

Only a few learners take part in 2-year VET programmes, leading to qualifications, without completing upper secondary education. Graduates of 2- and 3-year programmes can continue their education as regular students to attain a (one level) higher qualification, which is decided by each school individually.

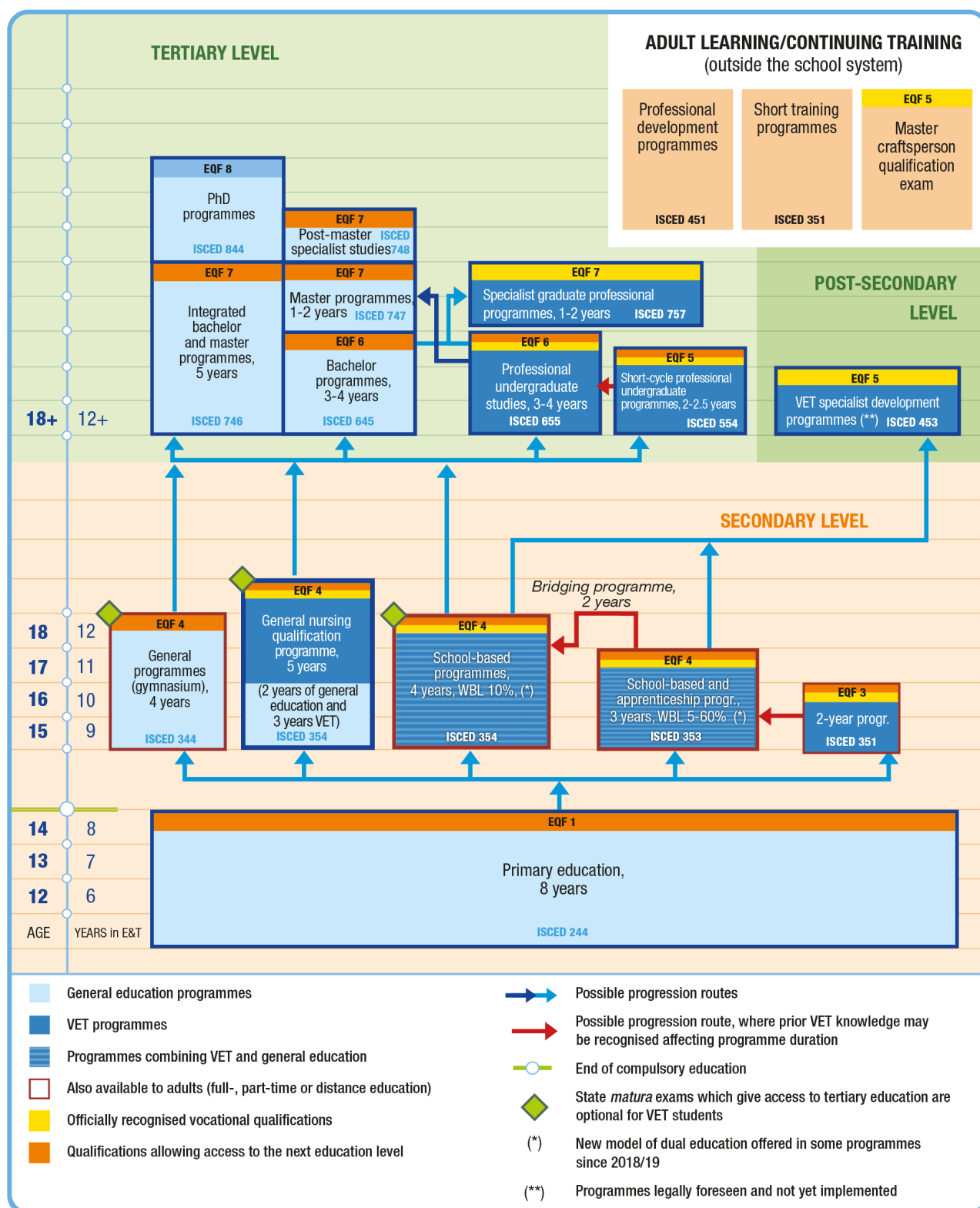
VET specialist development programmes (EQF 5) are being introduced at post- secondary level.

Professional education and training are offered at tertiary level. Short-cycle professional undergraduate programmes last 2 to 2.5 years and lead to qualifications at CROQF/EQF level 5. 3- to 4-year professional undergraduate programmes lead to a professional bachelor diploma at CROQF level 6.st (*) / EQF level 6. Specialist graduate professional studies last 1 to 2 years and lead to a professional specialist diploma at CROQF 7.1.st (*) / EQF level 7.

Adult education and training in Croatia lead to educational attainment at EQF levels 1 to 5 for learners older than 14. Most programmes are VET-related, ranging from short training and professional development to programmes leading to qualifications equivalent to those in IVET. The education ministry's approval of programmes leading to formal certificates is necessary, with prior positive opinion from ASOO.

(*) As per Amendments to the CROQF Act (Official Gazette No 20/2021), abbreviation 'st' is added to professional qualifications at CROQF level 6 to differentiate these from university qualifications at the same level, indicated by abbreviation 'sv'. 'St' is abbreviated from *stručni* (professional), and 'sv' from *sveučilišni* (university).

VET in Croatia's education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Cedefop, & Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE). (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Croatia: system description. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). *Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database – detailed VET system descriptions* [Database]. www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/croatia-u3

Distinctive features of VET

VET in Croatia has two main roles. Alongside preparation for labour market entry, it enables progression to tertiary education; this is primarily through 4-year VET programmes, where learners spend half of their time acquiring general competences. In 2020 (summer examination period), 83% of VET students at CROQF level 4.2/EQF level 4 applied for the state matura exams, 67% passed the matura exams, and 51.1% enrolled in tertiary education studies in the year of their graduation.

Participation in VET at upper secondary level is one of the highest in the EU (70% compared to the EU-27 average of 48.7% in 2021). Croatia has the lowest rate of early school leaving in the EU (2.3% in 2022, compared to the EU-27 average of 9.6%).

Self-assessment at VET schools is part of the quality assurance system. Support measures are in place to advance self-assessment, including school visits, upgrades to the online tool e-Kvaliteta and feedback reports with recommendations.

To promote excellence in VET, Croatia has established a network of 25 regional centres of competence. These will offer state-of-the-art technologies, teaching excellence and work-based learning, training for professionals, VET teachers and in-company mentors, as well as close cooperation with local businesses.

In 2019, the first WorldSkills Croatia competition launched a reformed model of VET student competitions. With 10 000 visitors, over 40 disciplines, high visibility, and stakeholder endorsement, this became the leading national event for the promotion of VET. The competition was organized for the fourth time in 2023, becoming the largest education event and skills showcase in Croatia and the region.

Challenges and policy responses

Priorities for VET development focus on increasing labour market relevance, quality, attractiveness and internationalisation. Reforms are addressing outdated curricula, skills mismatches, work-based learning, apprenticeship, and VET's public image. The flagship initiative, VET curriculum reform, aims to comprehensively redesign in line with labour market needs, learning outcomes, and work-based learning, contemporary teaching, with strong support for VET providers. Youth unemployment (aged 15 to 24), which was 16.6% in 2019, rose to 21.9% in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic's economic effects but decreased to 18% in 2022 as the economy recovered. Similarly, the share of young people (aged 15 to 24) neither in employment nor in education and training (NEETs) increased from 11.8% in 2019 to 12.7% in 2021 but returned to 11.9% in 2022. Youth guarantee schemes are in place to help young people enter employment, apprenticeships, education, or training within 4 months of leaving school or becoming unemployed.

National demographics have reduced the number of learners, particularly in apprenticeship programmes (JMO). Enrolment in JMO halved between 2013 and 2018 but began recovering, increasing by 30% in 2023. A new dual education model was introduced in 2018 to improve the quality of work-based learning and apprenticeships.

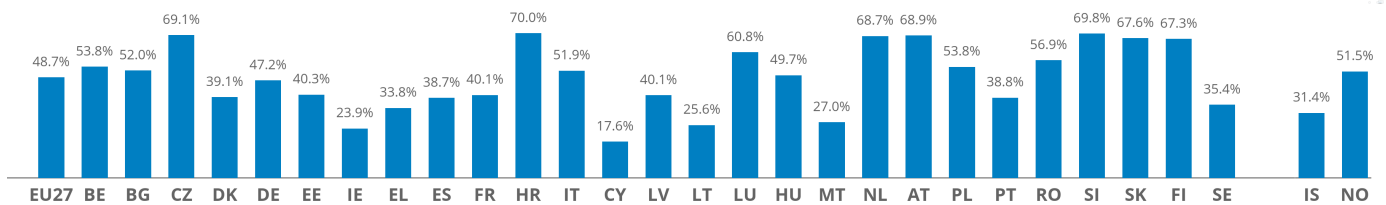
Participation in adult learning in 2022 was 4.4%, positioning Croatia at the lower end of EU range despite the tax incentives available for entrepreneurs for education and training costs, and VAT exemptions for adult education providers offering programmes approved by the education ministry. The main activities aim at promotion of lifelong learning in Croatia through awareness-raising efforts by ASOO.



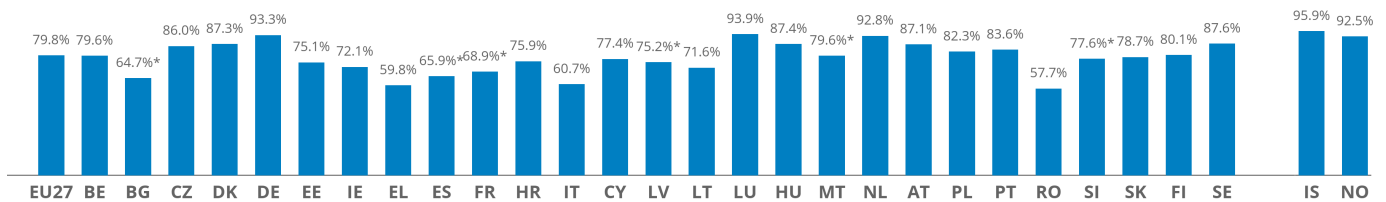
Croatia

Education and training in figures

IVET students as % of all upper secondary students, 2021

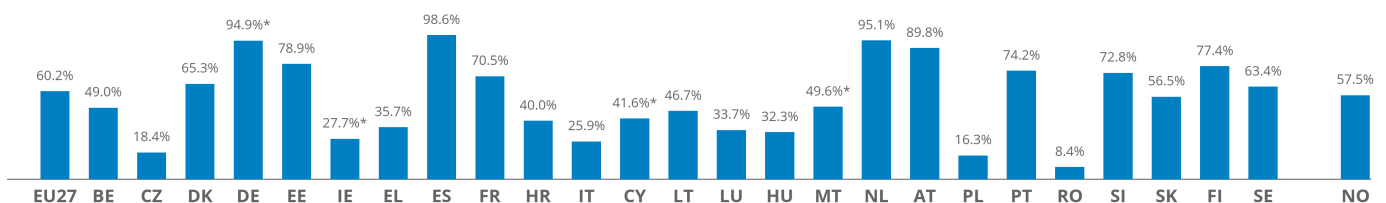


Employment rate for recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) (%), 2022



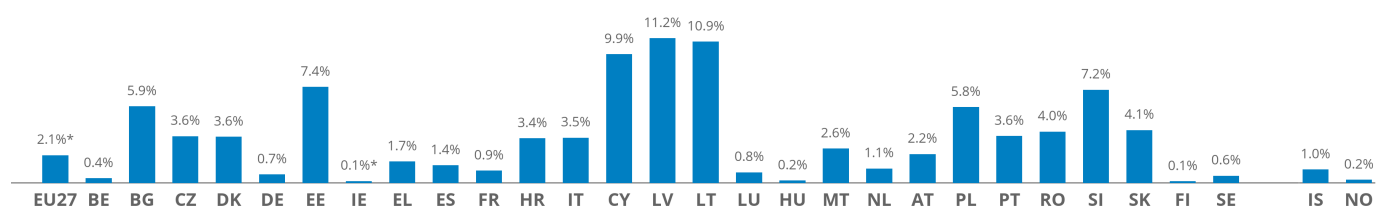
Notes: Bulgaria, Latvia, Malta and Slovenia: (u) low reliability, Czechia: (b) break in time series, Spain and France: (d) definition differs

Recent IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds) with a work-based learning experience as part of their vocational education and training (%), 2022



Notes: Germany, Ireland and Cyprus: (u) low reliability

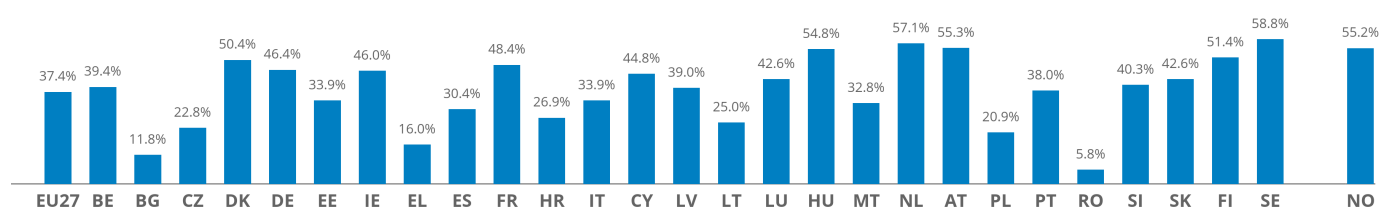
IVET learners who benefitted from a learning mobility abroad (%), 2021



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Notes: EU27: (d) definition differs (V) Cedefop estimate, Ireland: (d) definition differs, Croatia, Cyprus, Netherlands and Slovenia: (z) not applicable

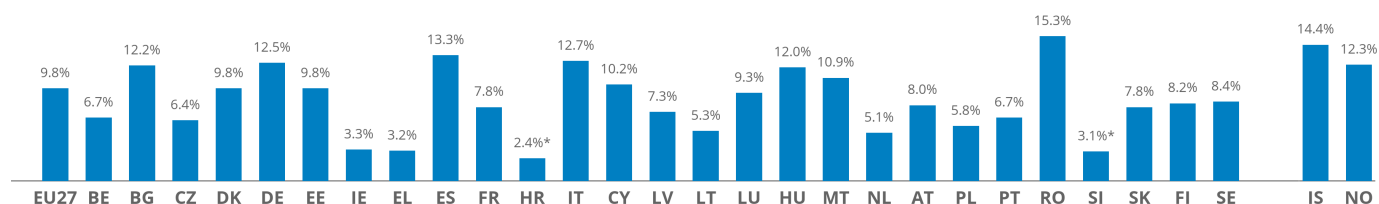
Adults (25-64 year-olds) with a learning experience in the last 12 months (%), 2016



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Notes: All values: (b) break in time series

Early leavers from education and training (%), 2021



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Notes: EU27, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Malta, Netherlands, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway: (b) break in time series, Croatia and Slovenia: (b) break in time series (u) low reliability

Source: [Cedefop's Key indicators on VET](#)



Further information

- Cedefop and Refernet. (2023). *Timeline of VET policies: Croatia*.
- Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education. (2022). *Teachers and trainers in a changing world - Croatia: Building up competences for inclusive, green and digitalised vocational education and training (VET)*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.
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- Eurydice. (2024): *National education systems: Croatia*.

https://refernet.hr/en	ReferNet Croatia
https://mzo.gov.hr/	Ministry of Science and Education
https://www.asoo.hr/	Agency for VET and Adult Education
https://www.azoo.hr	Education and Teacher Training Agency
https://www.ampeu.hr/	Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes
https://www.ncvvo.hr	National Centre for External Evaluation of Education
https://mrosp.gov.hr/	Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy
https://mingor.gov.hr/	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
https://www.hup.hr	Croatian Employers Association
https://www.hgk.hr	Croatian Chamber of Economy
https://www.hok.hr	Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts
https://www.hzz.hr/	Croatian Employment Service

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